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**FINSBURY LECTURES.**

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REPORTS OF LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE  
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BY W. J. FOX.

*William Fox*  
No. II.

**ARISTOCRATICAL & POLITICAL  
MORALITY:**

(THE SECOND OF A COURSE ON "MORALITY AS MODIFIED BY THE  
VARIOUS CLASSES INTO WHICH SOCIETY IS DIVIDED.")

**LONDON:**

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## ARISTOCRATICAL AND POLITICAL MORALITY.

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THE subject of this morning's lecture is, as you know by the notice already given, Aristocratical and Political Morality; that is to say, those aberrations from the standard of morality, considered as the means of happiness, which are produced by the distinctions implied in the first of these terms, or which result from the possession of political power and the collisions of political warfare.

Aristocracy may be said to be of two kinds; there is a natural aristocracy, and an artificial aristocracy; and they are as dissimilar in their character and in their influence as they are in their origin. The one consists of those differences between man and man, which are either born with us, or which we are born with certain tendencies and facilities for realizing; the other consists of those differences which are the results of social institutions contrivances, and arrangements: one of these I take to be classed amongst the greatest blessings of humanity; and the other is, according to my apprehension, one of its most pernicious evils. The aristocracy of nature consists, as I have just said, in various differences which are either born with us,—which belong to that diversity of human constitution at a conviction of which, I think, every observant philosopher must arrive; or which there is a tendency, a strong and prevailing tendency in the nature and in the early circumstances of individuals, to arrive at the possession of. For instance, I should say that the

first and most simple quality of natural aristocracy is bodily strength—an obvious difference between man and man, provided for in his constitution, manifested from his very birth, and which has been found to obtain at all times and in all places. It is this which led to the first personal distinctions that can be traced between men ; this made the chieftain of the savage tribe in ancient times, as it evaporates now in making the best wrestler on the village green. In either case its influence was probably useful, as leading by the simplest mode to some notion of diversity, of order, of harmonious combination. It was this which made the first heroes, and the best class of men that ever bore that appellation ; those men who under the impulse they received from a consciousness of their own powers, did the services which a rude age required—who went forth to rid the world of wild beasts that invaded the dwellings, the ill-defended dwellings of the first settlers among ancient tribes,—whose feats are like those recorded in a little further advanced state of society, in the book of Judges. We find it was often this quality that led to a man's judging (as it was called) in Israel. His political elevation was a consequence of the prowess which afforded a rallying point to his subjugated and scattered countrymen, and enabled them to effect their deliverance from the aggressions of the neighbouring tribes, who were endeavouring permanently to enslave or utterly to destroy them. In a much later period this was a character of the knight-errantry of chivalry ; it belongs to the best qualities with which that character has been associated, namely, the generous employment of superior bodily energy for the mitigation of some of the evils which attend the formation of the social condition.

Another source of natural aristocracy is to be found in that superior fineness of the senses, that greater facility for receiving impressions from the objects around, which it is, I think, demonstrable that some constitutions are

gifted with above others in a very high degree. It was this which led to the first notices of musical sounds. This led to the various inventions that are attributed to an early period of society—the working of different kinds of metals, and the fashioning them into implements which might minister to human convenience or to human enjoyment. This formed the minstrels, the bards of an early age—those whose instructions were in their own sensations—whose musical science was in their own perception of the affinity of sounds, of the result of their melodious sequence or harmonious combination, and the power in themselves to form such combinations and to produce these effects in others. And verily these men were in their time a blessing to society. The minstrel might be often the attendant of the baron ; but he was frequently a better man than the baron, for his influence was of a softening, and a refining tendency : it occasioned many a mitigation of the barbarities and cruelties of warfare as then conducted, and inspired men with thoughts and feelings of a somewhat finer nature than would have germinated in the rudeness of mere martial prowess.

It is this constitution, too, under certain modifications, which leads to the pursuit of natural philosophy,—to the combinations of experimental philosophy,—to the invention of useful machinery,—to the formation of those contrivances, gradually becoming more complicated, by which the productions of the earth are rendered efficient for the support, clothing, and comfort of man. The individual who manifests an early propensity towards pursuits of this description, has generally a keener eye for the perception of qualities in external objects, and a greater facility for marking the differences which exist ; he forms, from the exercise of senses so gifted, a stronger habit of noticing the different combinations that may be effected, and the results that may be produced, than other men, and acquires a corresponding facility for their realization ;

and thus arises the keen and careful analysis of the philosophical experimentalist; and all that acuteness of invention and discovery in science, art, and manufactures, which has in various ages and countries led men to the employment of various kinds of apparatus, which have gradually grown into machinery of the most astonishing power.

The same natural tendencies lead to the production of the artist, and to the promotion of art in all its various forms and modifications. The formation of the eye so as to be particularly influenced by colour is the natural foundation of skill in painting; as a similar perception of form is of the desire and power for the production of sculpture; and as a general power of accommodating the physical frame to the expression of mental emotion, and to the embodiment of even the thoughts which others have poured forth, and of the passions which others have delineated, forms the artist of the theatre, only known in a far more advanced grade of civilization.

In all these cases, as in the first, and indeed more manifestly than in the first (bodily strength), there is a provision made for the benefit of society. Those whose senses are less acute, whose frames are less adapted to this nicety of observation, or to this facility of production, instead of being worse, instead of being degraded or injured, are all the better for the possession of such faculties by others of their fellow-creatures. There is a constant ministering to them for their enjoyment and for their improvement, and thus also is produced that diversity which constitutes beauty, and promotes utility, in the moral world as well as in the natural world; and which, when exhibited in the varieties of human power, taste, and feeling, is not less subservient to good than the variety of forms, of colours, and of combinations, which so delight us in the phenomena of the heavens and the earth.

Another source of natural aristocracy is of a more remote kind, because the tendency is not so promptly perceived or realized ; still I think it is correctly referred to nature in distinction from art, and to the common tendency of humanity as distinguished from the arrangements of society : I mean that tenacity, that aptitude for persevering, for continued effort in a given direction, which seems to imply an original peculiarity of constitution, mental or physical, which some men have always developed much more remarkably than others. It is this which leads to the aristocracy of industry, of foresight, of prudence, of experience, and of character. It is this which causes some men to be marked out from others; because having fixed on an object, which is generally selected with greater care, they pursue it with far more singleness and tenacity of purpose,—holding on year after year, in spite of various discouragements from within and from without,—still piling up and piling up the building which they have determined to raise; appreciating consistency and justice, in their essential connexion with honourable success in an honourable pursuit, however humble may be the character of that pursuit; and thus at length, without any aid from political contrivances, without any interference from institutions, without any vantage ground given to them by art and human combination,—thus at length becoming men to whom their fellow-men look with trust, and honourable confidence; on whom they place a reliance similar to that which the traveller feels, when he plants his foot upon firm and solid ground, having escaped from the unstable footing of bog and marsh; such as encourages their fellow-creatures through all their diversities to prize character and to perceive the means by which it is to be attained and realized, and the good which it bestows upon individuals, both in its direct and in its indirect and reciprocal agency.

Another condition of natural aristocracy is to be found in those mental powers, whatever be their source—(for that is a question into which I enter not at all; whether these things be resolved, according to one system of philosophy, into the spiritual nature of the mind, and the supposed diversity of faculties in that spiritual existence; or whether, with others, we ascribe it to early association; or whether it be traced to the configuration of the brain, and its different organs: it matters not to my purpose what theory be adopted.) I think the diversities, which I am now describing, cannot but be traced to original differences in the constitution of the individual; and another of these is that which generates the powers of combination, of moral calculation—the faculty for estimating what passes in men's thoughts; for, observing and tracing their actions, and assigning them rightly to the principles from which those actions emanate, and which thus qualifies men for rulers over their fellow-creatures; and leads to qualities that point out the orator, the legislator, the statesman; and, in an early age, and with favourable opportunities, the founder of a kingdom, or an empire.

The only remaining source of natural aristocracy which I need advert to, is that fineness of temperament, or felicity of influence, which produces higher qualities than any yet enumerated, and to be exercised in a nobler sphere, the poetical and philosophical nature,—the intense feeling, which makes man's frame vibrate to every impulse like an Eolian harp, but with more tenacity as its emotions are stronger,—the clear thought, which enables him to brush away with a prompt and strong hand the cob-webs of sophistry, and to link closely and firmly together the logical chain of cause and effect; and thus to trace the principles of humanity, and the operation of those principles, and to draw out the thoughts and feelings which are to provide for their further de-

velopement: and as the last class mentioned connects itself with the organization of men in society, so does this with the tendency to progression; and it furnishes the means by which that progression is continually carried on—namely, by the production of individuals who start forward in advance of their fellow-creatures, and marshal on the whole human race in that grand career which is assigned for it by its omnipotent Creator.

Now, in all this one traces good—almost unmixed good. It is the dictate of nature that there should not be one great blank equality, or identity rather, in the human constitution; that there should be a variegation in humanity, like that which obtains in the stars of heaven, and in the productions of the earth; and that these varieties should be such as that each may minister to each, and the powers of all may tend to the advance of the whole. Even in this native aristocracy, it must not be concealed that there are temptations. The sense of superiority, however well founded, however true, requires caution and check. Though derived immediately from nature, though held by the patent of the Almighty, superiority is perilous to man. It is unwholesome for him not to recognize something superior to himself; not merely in the heavens above, but amongst his brethren of the earth around him. As there may be consolation to distress, by finding in what was deemed “the lowest deep, a lower still;” so there is a wholesome lesson to superiority, in finding itself impressed with reverence for a superiority of some other description, which its own powers will not enable it to realize. There is a necessity for keeping down the sense of difference, by looking at the qualities which are universal. It is desirable for nature’s nobles, if they would avoid the abuse of their own inherent aristocracy, that they should see how comparatively insignificant are even their advantages, when put by the side of the great common

principles of our being,—the principles which are alike inherent in the noblest, and in the meanest,—the principles to which humanity owes all its lustre as a peculiar nature, and to which, therefore, every individual in humanity should do a becoming, and honourable, and useful reverence. Man's fraternity, his common nature, his common destiny, in the sight of the Creator, should ever be graven (and I believe that it is generally most deeply graven) in the hearts of those whose individual portion may yet be in nature's aristocracy.

But while these qualities tend so to good, it may also be remarked that their tendency is connected with the circumstance of their being personal qualities ; of their being not hereditary. I apprehend that even the aristocracy of nature would lose its worth, and might be transformed into a most oppressive mischief, were these qualities capable of regular transmissions from father to son through successive generations, or were they, in fact, so transmitted. For what would then happen, but that different races of mankind would arise, of which some would inevitably be the oppressors of others ? There would be a tribe of strong men, who, elevated above mere intelligence, would reduce the rest to vassalage. There would be the mental aristocracy, which, to preserve its own ascendancy over strength, would have recourse to all sorts of arts, tricks, contrivances, and falsehood, and become alike corrupt in itself, and the agency of corrupting others. While the best qualities, mental and moral, if we suppose them to be possessed in succession, within certain defined limits, would produce a tribe that could not retain those lively sympathies with the rest of humanity, which could not exercise those deep feelings of benevolence towards others, that naturally spring out of the very same qualities where they are only of personal possession.

If the application of the hereditary principle, even to

the aristocracy of nature, would transform that good into an evil, what can we anticipate of a distinction that has no other foundation whatever? The artificial aristocracy is based altogether upon the forced application, the application in spite of nature, of the hereditary principle. It is manufactured by endeavouring to make all the provisions that institutions can make for hereditary property, hereditary dignity, and hereditary authority. It endeavours to promote the first by such a theory or practice as that of primogeniture; by tying up immense property to one particular line, and thus obstructing the natural and wholesome flow of wealth from one part of the community to another, by which it would visit all in turn, like the light of heaven, or like the refreshing rains that water the fields, and crown them with fertility. It fixes its boundaries to fluctuations of this description, and endeavours to create a class which, from age to age, shall be broadly marked, by large possessions, from the rest of the community. So it is sought to keep up distinctions by means of title,—by sinking the proper name of the individual,—by creating a fictitious name, which originally had a meaning, because it designated those who exercised certain authority within certain localities. The titles of the peerage were originally marks denoting office: they described those who held property in a certain district, and who exercised certain authority in that district; who were petty governors; who were the rulers and judges, the chieftains of those spots, with some form of authority, some modification of the sovereign authority entrusted to their charge. But all this descriptiveness and propriety soon pass away, and the designation sinks into a mere falsehood, or an unmeaning sound; very often, indeed, not appertaining to any descendant of the original possessor, not describing the family or race from which its wearer sprang, but altogether arbitrary, a standing lie in the face of history and of the community.

While these methods for marking out a class have little to recommend them, they are far less objectionable than the creation of permanent distinctions between man and man, by the investiture of some with hereditary authority—with authority to make laws—with authority to sit in judgment, and that on the most important considerations, involving even the fortune, life, and honour of the individuals who are subjected to such a tribunal. What can be a greater sacrifice of all consistency, of all reasonableness and propriety, of all morality, than that a man should be deemed qualified and be authorized to sit in judgment, not only on what is dearest to individuals, but in what may concern the interests of a mighty empire, and affect the permanent condition of countless millions of human beings—I allude to such judicial investigations as was that of the impeachment of Warren Hastings for his conduct as Governor of India,—what more absurd or immoral than that any one should be entitled to act as a judge, as an irresponsible judge, on questions so momentous as this, simply because he is the son of the son of the son of a man who won a battle, or who burnt a fleet, or who betrayed a kingdom, or who was the illegitimate offspring of a sovereign, or who was accessory to the restoration of the Stuarts, or to the expulsion of the Stuarts—yet on such grounds as these has originally rested the authority of supreme judges on such immense questions, in civilized communities. Nay, worse; that awful judicial authority has itself been only an incident comparatively disregarded in its subordination to the purpose of forming and perpetuating a privileged class.

I beg that the purpose of these lectures may not be lost sight of in the remarks which I am making. The object of these lectures is strictly moral as contradistinguished from what some call political; though I never give up the principle that politics are but a branch of

morality. But my object is not to show whether a free people should or should not create a privileged class—an aristocracy; my object is not to enter into the question—the political question—of such an institution, the principles on which it is founded, or the changes to which it should be subjected; but, as I have explained before, to trace the deflections from the standard of morality which arise from the circumstances of the different classes of which society is now constituted: an enquiry which no one can effectively or completely teach morality to others without instituting for himself, and communicating the results to their minds. It is in reference to this view, and to this only, that I enter upon the considerations which now present themselves to us. Else were it easy (and I by no means blink the question that I have a strong opinion on the subject) to show the utter flimsiness with which, as to any alleged purpose whatever of common good, such institutions, arbitrary in their nature and in their principles, are sometimes defended. It might be shown, that so far from giving that permanency to the forms of institutions, and to the conditions of a people, which they have sometimes been regarded as conferring, they are in fact the most common and proximate cause of discontent and convulsions, and have linked themselves in history with the most violent strifes and the bloodiest revolutions. It might be shown, that the supposed tendency in hereditary title to make a son emulate the virtue of his sire, through successive generations, is simple fiction. Facts upon facts might be piled to demonstrate, that titles won by the purest patriotism, have been worn by those only notorious for the basest servility. Besides it might be shown that were there any ground for the notion of hereditary transmission of moral qualities, it would act the other way as to the utility of the institution. For how many of those who in any country and under any

arrangement for the production of aristocracy have won title and fortune, and left them to their descendants, have won them by virtue or wisdom, or by aught that it is desirable should be perpetuated in their posterity? How many have been indebted for their nobility to some military adventurer following a lawless chieftain to battle, and receiving his share of plunder in some rich tract of country, reaping where he had not sown, and reducing to slavery those by whose toils and industry it had been fertilized. Such is often the founder of a long and noble line; and who would wish his children, from generation to generation, to evince the same qualities? Nay, for actions baser far, because around this there is something of the false glare of military adventure and personal valour—for actions infinitely baser than this, have such prerogatives been conferred—for the most cowardly assassinations; for the basest of treachery; for all that we could almost wish should perish for ever in the individual, and not blot, by its record, the annals of the human race. O, if the devices of heraldry were traced to their origin, how many a coroneted peer or prince, with anything like the common feelings of humanity in his bosom, would desire to erase them from his equipage, and from any of the displays of his personal importance. He would blush to see them, to be reminded of them; and would sooner go forth in the plainest mode that ever Quaker adopted, than bear the emblazoned escutcheon of his ancestors.

It is said sometimes, that education for high and important offices is a rare attainment; that it cannot be expected, unless provision is made for it; and that provision is best made in the separation of a class that shall be so trained. Were our notions of the power of education to be derived from the instances in question, I fear we should very much modify those benevolent theories, which depend so completely on the influence of education,

for a change in the intellectual and moral condition of humanity. But they are not; and, moreover, it is one of the results of the institution of aristocracy to spoil education; to reduce it to mere convention; to alienate it from the common and the useful; and to shed the fame of learning upon that which can be rendered exclusive, and is capable of being a monopoly. That it lamentably fails of producing high mental attainment and power, any man has only need to have recourse to the most simple records of the past to ascertain. I took up the other day one of those useful publications, of the Society for the Diffusing Useful Knowledge, (which has well acted up to its title in this particular) the "Companion to the Almanac," for the year 1832. They gave in that number a "Literary Chronology," in which they have classed writers under the three heads of, first, those who have excelled in imagination—in the production of poem or fiction; secondly, those who have been distinguished for the setting forth of matters of fact—the historian, and the geographer, who belong to the descriptive, rather than the inventive; and, thirdly, expositors of science, and philosophers properly so called—men of speculation, men of large minds, and with that power of combination, to which I was just now adverting. I had the curiosity just to take the list for the last century, from the year 1700 to 1800, and to see what proportion that class (which is sometimes said to be created and supported, in order that their intelligence may be developed in a far higher degree than is possible in the inferior classes) to see, I say, what proportion they had contributed to the list on which rests England's glory for that period—her mental, her scientific, her philosophical glories in the eyes of the world at large, and of posterity. There were altogether one hundred and thirty-five names. In the first list,—those that have excelled in fiction, in works of the imagination—there are fifty-three

names, including one member of the aristocracy, Lady Mary Wortley Montague. In the next class,—those who distinguished themselves by historical productions—there were thirty-one names, of which two, Lord Lyttleton and Horace Walpole, belonged to the aristocracy. In the other class,—the noblest and most important of all—there were fifty-one names, to which three belonged to the aristocracy—Lord Bolingbroke, and two others, whose names do not at this moment occur to me. And this petty, paltry contribution was all that was derived from that order,—for two or three descendants of ancient but impoverished families are scarcely to be reckoned as belonging to it; while in poetry, where least it might be expected, (the poor often achieve science) there were such names, amongst others, as those of Akenside, the author of “The Pleasures of the Imagination,” deriving his origin from the humblest station; and Chatterton, the poor Bristol boy, whom patronage left to perish prematurely by his own hands, in consequence of the want, aye, of the means of bare subsistence; and of Burns, the ploughman, who walked in glory and in joy on the mountain-side, when those who were appointed to privilege and inheritance for the sake of cherishing intelligence, were not even stretching forth the slightest portion of the power which they possessed, to preserve genius its existence, and to keep from the lowest state of depression the unaided talent that defied their privileged competition.

It can scarcely be imagined but that permanent distinction, not connected with personal qualities, should generate a high degree of selfishness. The man who is marked out from others,—whose very existence seems to be reckoned a virtue,—who simply for existing (for anything more than this is optional on his own part) who, simply for existing, is endowed with the produce of the toil of twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty thousand of his fellow-

creatures, will naturally suppose that his existence has something in it of good and of glory. He will naturally suppose himself a counterpoise for these toiling thousands from day to day, the results of whose ceaseless exertions all flow to him alone. There is no stimulus. Give a man the reward of industry without the exercise of industry—invest him at once with that for which others must plan and labour and persevere through many and many a weary year of their lives, till probably towards the close, should they even then succeed—visit him with the reward of wisdom without the attainment of wisdom—let him have that meed of legislative and directing authority which should crown the man who, from his earliest years, has been watching his fellow-creatures and himself with an observant eye—the political philosopher who has made himself acquainted with the influence of institutions upon manners and upon happiness, under the various modifications to which they have been subjected in different countries throughout the world's history, ancient and modern; bestow on him the meed of talent and of character—give to him the appearance of that confidence which others look to as their recompense for a consistent course pursued under hard trials and temptations, gaining to themselves golden opinions by a long and painful process—and what do you but annihilate the worth of such qualities to these men? What do you but produce and encourage in him a sense of innate difference and superiority which is altogether a fallacy, but which leads him to act accordingly, and therefore divests his conduct of those benignant tendencies which belong to actions which are in conformity to truth? You teach him to disregard the most precious qualities of mind and character. All other classes must be permanently underrated by the dispositions which are thus fostered, and humanity itself contemned.

The Emperor Nicholas of Russia, it is said, made a

present the other day to the Emperor of Austria, of a magnificent carriage, with its horses, and to have given him a coachman into the bargain—probably thinking him by no means the most valuable part of the donation. This is only an exhibition on a small scale of the feeling which it is the tendency of every distinction between man and man, arbitrarily kept up, to produce towards their fellow-creatures. It is a comparative trifle to say that the barons of old would have done things like this in our own country: where humanity is undervalued, much worse is done in every and any country. Human souls are given away, not in individual donations, but by thousands and by millions; and they are only estimated according to the advantages which may be derived from them by privileged individuals. O, one cannot tell the privileges—privileges trampling humanity under foot—which belonged to aristocracy in its feudal form, the spirit of which, though despoiled of much of its power to harm, has descended to later times; privileges of so oppressive, so iniquitous, so gross, so beastly a character, that it is impossible even to enumerate them in conformity with the proprieties of modern language.

The insolence thus generated is kept down, in some measure, from being manifested by one portion of the privileged class towards another, by the very reasonable, the very humane, the very Christian practice of duelling, which associates itself most intimately with the notion of such a barrier between one class of men and another class of men; thus tending, whilst it is resorted to professedly—and it may be in such a state of society with some sort of reason—for the purpose of repressing insolence, to leave it altogether unrepressed in one class towards another class. Thus was it that Voltaire—the man whose name was to resound through Europe, while the names of the noblesse, his compeers, were able to furnish nothing that could approach and be visible within

the sphere of its lustre—the man who was to act upon the opinions of the intelligent and thinking classes in all the countries of Europe, and eventually all over the world—the man whose mighty powers (whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the tendency of the exercise of those powers) were such as to show him to be one of the aristocracy of nature, diversified as they were by so marvellous a keenness and intelligence, by so quick a sense of the incongruous and the ridiculous, by so much power even of poetical expression, and by such intense burning to destroy some of the oppressions under which men were then groaning; this man was subjected to the insult of receiving blows, inflicted by the cowardly agency of hired hands, without being allowed the privilege, such as it was, of the only reparation which, in the opinion and according to the feelings of the higher portions of society in his own country, could wash away the stain, and redeem him from the indignity. Such is the aristocracy of art in its collision with the aristocracy of nature.

The exclusive feeling of aristocracy extends itself to mental acquirements: it grasps at education, especially in a season of advancing knowledge, when information is spreading throughout the different orders of the community; it grasps at instruction as one of its perquisites or monopolies; and, however suppressed the feeling may be, or however there may be in some instances a noble superiority to it, or however it may be overborne by the importunate demands of the great many who will be taught, and will have the means of further instruction—still there are not wanting, symptoms which teach an impressive though disgusting truth. It has been possible for even enlightened and liberal noblemen, in an enlightened and liberal age, and one of rapidly extending knowledge, to refuse assistance in the formation of schools which would bring education of the very highest description within the easy grasp of the great majority

of the middle classes of the country, because (I believe I am using something like the very words), because they could see no reason why the old schools of the country, Eton, Harrow, Winchester, &c., should be put in abeyance, and the nobility patronize and subscribe to schools which would give the children of the “commonalty” and the “lower orders” a better education than their own sons.

Another tendency to a deflection from the genuine standard of morality in the existence of such circumstances, is that which is traced in what are, by universal consent regarded as the personal vices—as gaming, licentiousness, and follies and vices of a similar character, which are the particular objects of attack of those moralists who endeavour to keep out of view the character of virtue or vice in its connexion with what relates to man’s public acts, and his conduct as a member of the community; now the prevalence of qualities of this description, wherever an artificial aristocracy has existed, is so notorious that it can scarcely require either proof or illustration. Mr. Edgeworth, in his Essays on Education, mentions with deserved censure the fact, that Lord Holland, father of Charles James Fox, used to give him, when a mere boy, five guineas a week, for the very purpose of spending it in games of chance; and instances there are of allowances of much larger amount, for purposes as much worse as the donations were greater.

The condition of women is one of the surest tests of the advancement of a country in knowledge, in justice, in all that constitutes civilization, and its superiority over the savage state. The obligations of women to the benevolent spirit of Christianity have often been set forth and dilated upon eloquently. Why should not the same writers, the same pulpit orators, that have set forth these blessings, also show how the character and condition of women are deteriorated by artificial contri-

vances that exist in open defiance of the very spirit of Christianity? For, what is it that keeps down woman's intellect to the base level of its own frivolity, but the spirit of aristocracy? What is it that disarms woman of a fair and direct influence in matters which ought to be interesting to her mind, capable as that mind is of thought and principle, in order to invest her with an indirect influence, alike corrupt and degrading, both to those by whom, and to those upon whom it is exercised, but aristocracy? What is it that keeps woman in such a condition, by custom and by law, as to prevent her being the independent possessor and disposer of her own earnings, whether produced by the more menial occupation which she may fill, or by the highest exertions of intelligence and of genius; all of which may be and in this country often are, wrested from her; for which she is still dependent on the will of another—what, I say, keeps up this state of things but the aristocracy? And what else is it that provides for that continuous flow of degradation—the result of which is, not only to throw thousands and tens of thousands, who might have adorned society, into a state of degradation below society, but to spread a corrupt taint throughout the whole society?—what but the spirit of aristocracy produces and keeps up this evil, unknown comparatively in ancient times, and which stamps the foulest brand it bears upon modern and Christian Europe?

In my opinion it would be a good, if the protection of woman were better provided for, and her escape from what is often enduring misery secured, by some well-principled and generally applicable law of divorce; some law more favourable to her than the Mosaic law, which allowed man the irresponsible power of repudiating; and based on such principles as obtain throughout a great portion of Protestant Germany, and many, if not most, of the United States of America;

such as were in principle advocated by all the great leaders and authors of the Protestant Reformation ; and such as were proposed by Archbishop Cranmer and his coadjutors, in the work of the English Church Reformation. But whether this would be a good or not—about which opinions may widely differ—I apprehend that there can be but one opinion on the legislation, which, refusing an impartial, equal, and general law on the subject, provides it, practically, as a privilege for the more wealthy portion of the community, that they and they alone, shall have the means of legal escape from the marriage bond, whatever may be the provocation which renders such an escape desirable to the individual. For this is the state of things—that that bond is declared absolutely indissoluble ; but the universal law is suspended by private law, for the benefit of those who have the money and the influence to procure it. And this, I apprehend, it cannot be questioned, must greatly tend to degeneracy of manners, and to the sustainment of licentious principles, and licentious practices.

Very misplaced was the celebrated apology, that vice lost half its mischief by losing all its grossness. Vice does not lose its grossness, whatever external appearance of manners there may be in aristocracy. It never can, and never does, lose its tendency towards grossness. In a region supposed to be of far purer atmosphere than that which occasioned the sophistical plea, it has happened for a member of the very highest ranks of society, and invested with all the refinement and elegance which can be ascribed to station, to die and leave behind collections of disgusting engravings valued at thousands of pounds.

Another tendency of this state of society is to generate irreligion ; and, together with irreligion, hypocrisy. Thus it was, that the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who were the saints and the infidels of Jewry in our Saviour's

time, combined together very cordially for his destruction, and the persecution of his followers. Thus it was, that the augurs of ancient Rome kept up their superstitions, supported by the credulity of the people, until they could not meet in the streets without laughing in each other's face. Thus it was that the higher classes in France, before the revolution, and in Spain up to a comparatively recent period, sustained an external respect for forms of superstition which in their minds and hearts they had totally abjured. In this country religion may claim at the present time to be in what may be called a high degree of fashion, even the more enthusiastic modifications of religion. Still if we advert to the course of events we shall find, that up to the reign and into the reign of George III., religion was a mere jest amongst those who arrogated to be the superior class; and it was when the French revolution, and the tremendous powers which that revolution developed, seemed to be in alliance with infidelity, that alarm was taken—that the privileged class, sailing on the other tack, took religion into especial favour, for the same reason, and under the influence of the very same tendency under which scepticism, and unbelief, and scorn had previously flourished.

Now this combination is the most disgusting of all. It is not the honest, the plain-spoken, the obtrusive, and perhaps fanatical, unbeliever—the man who is forward to declare to others his renunciation of what he wishes to demolish in their minds also as errors; who speaks for this avowed purpose; who writes for it, and who perhaps within a few years may have gone to jail for it—it is not such a man who fills one with disgust; it is the unbeliever (and history shows many such,) who builds his fortunes and his honours upon the belief of others; it is the unbeliever who associates with, who courts, and perhaps eventually, who creates, bishops and archbishops; it is the unbeliever who adopts expressions of regard for

religion and the church, that in his political schemes he may have the support of churchmen, and their efficient partizanship ; it is the man who records himself, and is hailed loudly by others as the champion of the church, while he has not seen the inside of one perhaps for the greater part of his existence ; who persecutes those who speak what he thinks ; who keeps the forms of religion up, that they may keep the spirit of the people down ; who wages bloody wars, and passes restrictive laws for the nominal defence of that which in his heart he scorns ; and who, unfolding the banner of Church and King, only desires to aggrandize himself and his family by all that the Church can enable him to grasp, that the King in his munificence can bestow, or that any power can endow him with, at the nation's expense. This is the man that one turns from with disgust, as the worst of unbelievers that scepticism has ever entered on its muster roll.

The further tendency of aristocracy, I think, is both to public and private dishonesty ; exemption from those personal liabilities to which other classes of the state are subjected, cannot but make a man—and I believe there are many who can vouch for the fact—comparatively indifferent to the amount of debt incurred, or to the sacrifices which may be imposed upon that industry which has administered unremunerated to his gratification. But a far greater evil than this is public dishonesty ; and this leads me to the only further view which I can take of what was announced in the title of this lecture as Political Morality. For I take it the departure of political and public conduct from the great standard of morals consists chiefly in the separate interest of a class with power to bend the authority of the state to the promotion of that interest. Political power is chiefly in the hands, must be in the hands, of the aristocracy ; and therefore Political Morality is only a modification of Aristocratical Morality—

the most momentous modification of it, because it acts through the institutions and the policy of a country, both home and foreign, and therefore acts on the condition of millions and millions of human beings through successive generations.

I can go but little into this. It were long to tell of that original dishonesty by which the property of this country changed its character, shook off its liabilities retaining its advantages, and imposing those liabilities on the nation. For properties which have descended from the Conquest or from the days of chivalry, or from the times of the white and red roses, all which gives lustre and antiquity to nobility—these were originally, in one respect, trusts held on conditions ; every man being bound to follow the sovereign to the field with his retainers, armed and provisioned, and the entire military establishment for the defence of the country being to be paid out of lands which were granted with that condition. But in the course of aristocratic legislation this is got rid of ; instead of the barons finding the retainers, finding the entire army, at their own cost, the nation pays the cost, the army remains still their retainers ; the estate is held without the deduction ; nay, with the very important addition of the reception of the most considerable portion of that amount which is paid by the country for the support of the troops by which it is to be defended. Is not this glaring and foul dishonesty ? It were long to tell, how, as growing wealth and growing intelligence forced upon the government, for the more ready attainment of supplies, the rudiments of a representative check, that check became perverted,—was transformed into the representation, not of the community that were to be taxed, but of the class that was to receive the proceeds of that taxation—and at length aggravated, under the forms of freedom, the very mischiefs which it was erected in order to control. It were long to tell what wars

have been waged under this influence—wars in which the people had no interest whatever, and could have no interest from the very first;—wars with which the people had no connexion, but that in them their treasure was wasted, in them their blood was shed, and by them too often, unhappily, their characters were deteriorated; but which still have continued, until the accumulation exhibits results at which humanity stands aghast. It were long to tell how the church, which they have sometimes endowed and sometimes plundered, has been perverted by their patronage, and made the comfortable and cheap receptacle of the junior branches of their families, and of their personal or political dependents, to the destruction of its purity, independence, and usefulness. It were long to tell how the fight of party has been sustained;—how principles have been avowed for particular purposes by individuals and by bodies, and as unblushingly cast off even after the strongest interest had been excited in the population—cast off on the first attainment of power, in order to pursue an opposite course,—how, while a variety of catch words have been coined in order to deceive mankind, there has been that mutual understanding which has only led to the advancement of a common-class interest at the common public expense;—what infamous coalitions have been made amongst themselves, and what infamous deceptions practised upon the people, unblushingly. It were long to tell how even the security of the amusements and sports of the privileged, for a time acted upon the country; so that out of ten thousand tenants of the jails in different parts of the country, nearly two thousand were committed for offences against the game laws—that is to say, were enduring punishment, and had been made criminals, for the sake of securing a somewhat despicable gratification for their superiors. It were long to trace the multitudinous roll of taxation, and the list of taxed articles of food and of

clothing, extending to all the necessaries of life, and those which should be its common comforts, including even knowledge in the oppressive list of imposts—whilst that which alone implies no labour whatever for its production, which is the mere result of the fertility and diversity of soil with which God has invested the earth for man's good, escapes without impost, or with the gentlest touch of taxation that imagination can devise.

I passed over in this brief enumeration, in order to mention at a little more length, one matter which I shall introduce in the words of a communication that has appeared in the newspapers of the past week, in the leading journals of both sides, and which may therefore be taken as independent of party. If you do not see its entire pertinence at first, I think you will not fail to perceive it afterwards. It is of some interest to every one who eats bread :

“ COMPARISON OF FOREIGN GRAIN WITH THE ENGLISH MARKET.

“ The highest quotation of white wheat of the first quality at Hamburg is seventy-four rix dollars current the last, which answers to 23s. 10d. the quarter ; and the highest quotation of red wheat of the first quality is seventy rix dollars current the last, which answers to 22s. 8d. the quarter, and therefore the mean price at Hamburg of white and red wheat together is 23s. 3d. the quarter.

“ The highest quotation of white wheat of the first quality in London is 45s. the quarter ; and the highest quotation of red wheat of the first quality is 41s. the quarter ; and therefore the mean price in London of white and red wheat together is 43s. the quarter. It appears, therefore, that wheat is eighty-five per cent. dearer in London than at Hamburg ; and that with the sum of 2l. 3s. a man may buy fourteen and three-quarters bushels of wheat at Hamburg, whereas with the same sum he can buy only eight bushels in London.

“ The highest quotation of Zealand white wheat of the first quality at Amsterdam is 195 florins the last, which equals 31s. 5d. the quarter ; and the mean price of wheat in London being 43s. the quarter, it follows that wheat is thirty-six and one-eighth per cent. dearer in London than at Amsterdam.

“The highest quotation of red wheat of the first quality at Antwerp is eight and three-quarters florins current the hectolitre, which answers to 36s. 5d. the quarter; and the highest quotation of red wheat in London being 4ls. the quarter, it follows that wheat is twelve and five-eighths per cent. dearer in London than at Antwerp.

“The highest quotation of red wheat of the first qualify at Stettin is thirty-one dollars current the wispel of twenty-four scheffels, which equals 2ls. 1d. the quarter; and the highest quotation of red wheat in London being 4ls. the quarter, it follows that wheat is ninety-four and a half per cent. dearer in London than at Stettin; and that with the sum of 2l. 1s. a man may buy fifteen and a half bushels of wheat at Stettin, whereas with the same sum he can buy only eight bushels in London.

“The mean or average of the prices of wheat at Hamburgh, Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Stettin, is 28s. 1d. the quarter; and the mean price of wheat in London being 43s. the quarter, it follows that the mean price in London is fifty-three and one-eighth per cent. higher than that of the four above-mentioned places.

“The present duty on the importation of foreign wheat into England is 49s. 8d. the quarter, which is equal to the following rates: to a rate of 213l. 12s. 2d. per cent. on the prime cost of wheat at Hamburgh; to a rate of 158l. 1s. 10d. per cent. on the prime cost of wheat at Amsterdam; to a rate of 136l. 7s. 8d. per cent. on the prime cost of wheat at Antwerp; to a rate of 285l. 11s. 6d. per cent. on the prime cost of wheat at Stettin; and to a rate of 176l. 17s. 1d. per cent. on the mean price of the four above-mentioned places.”

That is to say, the poor weaver in Spitalfields, earning his few shillings a week, with the toil of his many hours a day, pays one shilling and seven pence halfpenny for so much bread, seasoned with Aristocratical and Political Morality, as, without that condiment, he would obtain for ten pence; or, taking the average price mentioned in the extract, instead of the lowest, he pays one shilling and three-pence halfpenny for his tenpenny worth of bread. The duty or tax on what would cost tenpence at Stettin, is two shillings and fourpence halfpenny. This difference, this fearful difference, is levied upon him—

upon his bones and sinews upon his soul and body—upon his daily toil—for no other reason than this—a privileged class is created and vested with the powers of legislation. Every class, when it can, turns those powers of legislation to its own account; but it is extraordinary that any class, under any circumstances, should have dared to contemplate, and succeeded in producing, a result so iniquitous, so disgusting, so intolerable.

I know, I confess, of nothing that can deepen the impression which the bare fact just stated must make on every thinking mind, and on every feeling heart. No other country, I think, has ever borne any thing to be compared with this; no individual despotism has ever been able to perpetrate anything, which could be put in the same rank of injustice or of cruelty. It is only the power—that very peculiar, that extensive power—which can be laid hold of and wielded by the great class of the state, that could thus tax the very means of existence; that could thus tax those who have nothing but the power of labour, with the chance of obtaining work—which work they are often obliged to beg and to entreat for the bestowment of—in order to keep up that which implies no labour, is attended with no condition, and of which the least that one could expect would be, that the possessors who never have earned it, should hold it with moderation, and not increase or even sustain its value by such oppressions on their less favoured fellow-creatures.

In discussing this subject, I have endeavoured rather to show tendencies, than to describe circumstances; and rather to resort to circumstances, than to introduce the mention of persons. The invidiousness of it, and the loathsomeness there would be in going into particular facts, have led me into this course; and could I have illustrated the moral principles and tendencies of aristocracy with equal satisfaction to my own mind, or with

equal benefit to yours, I should certainly have infinitely preferred taking all the instances and illustrations from the remotest region on the face of the earth, or from the earliest period of the annals of history. But it could not be otherwise exhibited, and brought home to your mental perceptions. I have therefore been compelled to the course I have adopted, and which I think shows clearly the manner in which artificial distinctions, artificially kept up, differ from the aristocracy of nature, and tend to pervert the standard of morality.

To what an extent has our religion become merely verbal and conventional. Why has not all this been exposed before by every preacher, and in every pulpit of the United Kingdom? It is of no avail to reply that they have been otherwise, and more spiritually, occupied; that they have been reading scripture. Why, I can read scripture too—listen. The Epistle of St. James, 5th chapter:—“ Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Hosts.”

Well now this is probably read in some pulpit or other, from Sunday to Sunday, and heard by hundreds and thousands; and what effect does it produce on their minds? I adopt not the denunciations in it—God forbid that I should, I merely expose evils, and endeavour to show the way in which the opinions of those whom I address may have a most important influence in the counteraction of those evils. They are of a far more enormous description than were those of the

monopolists of Judea, against whom the Apostle James poured fourth the fervency of his soul in the passage just read. And yet men tell you they receive great edification from the one, while perhaps they regard the other as a desecration. I said at the outset that these lectures were capable of a personal application, and that I would make them have it. They have, all of them, an individual bearing ; they have so, if it only related to the rectification of opinion, or to the direction of public and honourable efforts. But they do more than this ; we may all learn the power of circumstances in the formation of character. Indolence, servility, wealth, title, political power ; what wonder that these should twist and pervert humanity ! We see the natural cause of the vices which have commonly shown themselves in the class so privileged. And we see—what ? That they are worse than other men ? that they come into the world with different natures or tendencies ? No such thing ; they are what they are made, and so would others be. It were childish to vituperate the victims to a system which common acquiescence tends to support, to deteriorate, and to perpetuate. Glory to the men whose internal resisting power triumphs over the temptations of their lot, in whatever direction. The exposition I have made should lead us to render heart-honour of the purest and highest kind to those who manifest such virtuous intrepidity. When from the ranks of such a class there starts the poet who pours forth his soul in “ thoughts that breathe and words that burn ;” the philosopher who throws light on the path of physical discovery, or into the recesses of metaphysical truth ; or the statesman of sound principles and strong affection for the people’s rights, seeing his way through the heavy mist that institutions and prejudices have gathered round the intellectual vision, and calling on public aid for making progress in his useful course ; then, I say, there can be scarcely affixed a mark

upon the graduated scale of human worth too high for their deserts, and to render them the tribute they have so well and so spontaneously earned, should be a glad-some duty. And to produce this feeling is a good; it has a delightful and purifying tendency, especially as occurring amid the exhibitions, some of them most disgusting, which we have been compelled to witness.

There is, moreover, this individual lesson—this lesson for mankind—that in what exists by public opinion every, person has a responsibility—a serious and solemn responsibility. He contributes by the mere expression of his thoughts, or even by his silent acquiescence, to the only means by which such institutions can be affected, to the continuance of their corruptions, or to the process by which they must be formed, and be rendered subservient to the public good.

Again, as to what comes home to individual feeling. How delightful is the contemplation of our nature, with all its faculties, tendencies, and aspirations. How important to note the circumstances which aid its development, or mar its progress. How much to be deprecated are the influences which deface God's image in his creatures, even after its lustre has appeared, and brightened, disappointing hope. Have we no interest in these observations and inquiries? No obligations arising out of their results? The present subject abounds with them; with materials for knowledge, and intimations of duty. How beautiful is humanity! How beautiful is it in the aspiring generous youth; his mind full of the lessons and the enthusiasm derived from his classical education—ill defined, yet vast conceptions of glory and of good floating in his soul, and swaying his feelings to the dedication of his own powers to purposes noble as those of the noblest characters of antiquity; contemplating a career which he persuades himself will be one of undeviating patriotism, and stern consistency,

and wide utility, ultimately earning for him a well-merited popularity, the gratitude alike of the high and the low, to one who has beaten down the public foe or traitor, and steered the vessel of the state through perilous times to safety and prosperity ; and when his last victory of good for his country has been achieved, going down to his grave, not only with a name that shall be ever honoured, but with a heart simple and unsullied as in its earliest aspirations, and should it have no influence on our feelings and practical conduct, to see this fair prospect withered, darkened, and blasted ; to see the spell laying hold of such a mind and working its perversion ; to behold its noble powers caught in the trammels of faction, and enlisted for the low strife of party conflict—becoming more and more enthralled—the visions of his youth less and less perceptible—the foul mist thickening over the intellectual sight—till the hired and flattered tool of aristocracy takes his unblushing place in the ranks of corruption ; grows from a subordinate partizan into a principal ; and now divested of every principle and feeling which he once held dear, and which others held dear in him, earns the empty meed of perverted talent, and dies a lord.

Is not humanity beautiful, even in its roughest outline—In the peasant—the sturdy peasant, who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, and who thrives upon the bread he earns and eats ; who walks erect as man, feeling no dependence upon others any more than they on him, and thus working and winning his toilsome way ? Must not our feelings be acted on—and is it not right, useful, and practical, that they should, when we see influences at work that break him down, and rob him of his honest boldness,—that crush him into a vassal, or seduce him, should he possess political existence, into mental and moral treason to his country,—that destroy his best principles, and continually lower and lower his

state in society, till self-dependence is gone, and every mean art and grovelling purpose take such root in his character that it seems to have become native to the soil? Must we not abominate the power that thus scourges him into vassalage, bribes him into slavery, perhaps maddens him into a rioter or incendiary, and if he escape the death or exile of the felon, buries him a pauper?

Is not humanity beautiful in woman? in woman, with her youth, her simplicity, and that capacity for boundless devotion and boundless sacrifice which prepares her in any rank of society to adorn, and charm, and bless society? And ought we not to be disgusted — ought we not to dream of society coming under better arrangements than to remain subject to an influence which, in thousands and thousands of instances, interferes between the fair promise and the fairer fulfilment — brings a deadly blight over all this prospect of long, useful, and happy years of life and love, — and only presents a poor, broken-spirited, perverted creature, suffering and the cause of suffering, vicious and the cause of vice?

Is not humanity beautiful in the aspirations of the young religionist; even though enthusiasm should be there, and mingle something of its false colouring with the light of pure religion? Is it not beautiful in his fervent desire, not only to become himself more and more of that holy character which he contemplates, but to be the agent in turning others from the error of their way; in converting sinners, and in building up in knowledge and in every virtue, those who own the power of religious principle? And is it not grievous to see a promise, which is that of the life of a saint and the labours of an apostle, even after its fulfilment had commenced, broken by the worldly character of the church through whose means he is to exercise his functions; that devoted mind possessed by its engrossing temporalities hardened and embittered by its ceaseless collisions with men's properties and

rights ; his soul bowed to submission to the impositions of faith and forms, and bowed yet lower to dependence upon patronage, or upon all the changes and fluctuations of political party ; until, wasting a life in such struggles and interests ; and impairing his character from day to day, he, at length, instead of the illustrious and useful course that at first we anticipated for him, a blessed pathway to the holy of holies, is only bound to the chariot wheels of aristocracy, and dragged through the mire to rot in Mammon's temple.

Every one may find reason in such subjects as I have discussed to institute that self-investigation which is allowed by all to be one of the foremost duties of every Christian ; the duties which belong to the class of means rather than to that of ends, but which belong to the class of means in the highest order of efficiency. Now let any one consider the manner in which the influence of privilege must radiate through all the several orders of society, and he will find good ground for suspicion that he himself, in some way or other, may be within the meshes of the net ; that he himself may not have altogether escaped the contagion. O God ! thou didst make men upright, but they have sought out many inventions. Thou didst create men in the fraternity of equality, but many are the distinctions—vain, frivolous, and pernicious distinctions, too often—which they have set up against one another, regardless of thy voice, which speaks to them in all the works of nature, and in all the operations of providence. Religion levels, and reminds men that they are the common work of a common father : it tells them, (the New Testament from page to page) of their equality, but they heed it not : yea, they come together to hear those scriptures read, and to profess the faith which those scriptures teach, in the ostentatious exhibition of the very inequalities against which they are thus solemnly protesting, and with provision for

like inequalities in the gradations of rank amongst the ministers of religion by whom these doctrines are to be inculcated; and thy voice is not heard. The helplessness of birth levels, and all humanity comes into the world in the same feeble and dependent state. But here, from the first is man's folly at work, and the early flattery begins, and the early privilege is inculcated, until a broad girdle of distinction wraps round the babe, parting ever yet more and more, between the individual and his brethren of humanity; and thy voice is not heard or heeded. Death levels; passing his power alike on those of all ranks and stations, and again proclaiming equality. And yet even in death's regions there arises the marble monument, casting its shade on the lowly and nameless hillock, and thy voice death is unheeded and unheard. Oh, again and again must that voice speak, in the sound of providential events, in the march of human improvement, in the history of the future, already present in God's sight and included in the operation of God's plans; and again, if rightly we interpret the course of the past and reason from it to the future, again it will speak; that voice will be heard in the roaring of the mighty tide of circumstance and tendency, flowing yet onward and onward, and proclaiming in tones which are not to be resisted, that "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low, the crooked be made straight, and the rough places plain;"—proclaiming "the rich and the poor are met together, the Lord is the maker of them all," and "that of one blood did he form all nations of men," that we might therefore feel and act as equal brethren, love one another, and each do unto others as he would they should do unto him.